

New York State RFD Synopsis

It is my intent to show the high-lights of N.Y.S. post office handling of rural mail from the perspective of postal markings. I have drawn on the simplest elements of H. Richow's classification system to identify the range of markings the carriers were expected to apply, as they picked up the mail. The carriers received government issue cancels for the routes approved from the earliest in 1900 to July 1, 1903. While some postmasters replaced worn out rubber stamps and others as they came into the system after July 1903 purchased such devices the number that can be identified is small. After hand cancels the rules in effect required manuscript cancels, when properly done, to show the town, the route and the date; however, the system did not provide any monitoring.

The evolution of the system resulted in almost doubling the number of the offices with routes by 1916 with slightly more than twice the number of routes statewide. A review of the collection on which this exhibit is based shows that hand stamps peaked in 1903, declined after 1906 and are rarely seen after 1912. The manuscript markings showed a similar pattern peaking in 1910, declining after 1913 and are scarce after 1916. The examples of postal service, as shown here, are scarce. One must surmise that much of the mail picked up rurally was returned to the local office for canceling after the system was a dozen years old. Examples of many of the later started routes may only be recorded by address.

New York State RFD References

U. S. Official Postal Guide – 1904 to 1931

Official Register of the U. S. – 1901 and 1903

Post Office Daily Bulletin – 1900 to 1905

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County Systems of RFD by Edith Doane, Crete, Nebraska(1977)

New York Postal History by Smith and Kay,APS(1982)

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Rural Free Delivery in New York(Whole No.1)

RFD in NYS, Part II: The Manuscript Period(Whole No.2)

RFD in NYS: The Official Hand Cancel Period(Whole No.6)

RFD Cancels – A Follow –up(Whole No.11)